

3A

WASHINGTON TIMES
12 November 1984

Watergate never bugged, new book claims

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Watergate headquarters of the Democratic National Committee was never bugged in 1972, according to a new book on the scandal that eventually led to the resignation of President Nixon.

Although the FBI investigation of the June 17, 1972, break-in quickly concluded that no electronic eavesdropping had occurred, that information was never given to top Nixon administration officials, says the book, "Secret Agenda," by Jim Hougan.

Mr. Hougan, whose book will be published this week by Random House, based his conclusions on thousands of pages of FBI documents about the investigation that he obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Hougan, the Washington editor of Harper's magazine, also says the break-in at the Watergate arose from a sex scandal rather than an attempt to bug the Democratic offices for political purposes.

The book concentrates on the break-in itself, rather than the resulting attempts at a cover-up that led to Mr. Nixon's resignation in 1974 along with the conviction of officials of his campaign and administration for a variety of crimes.

Five men pleaded guilty to burglary and conspiracy in the Watergate break-in, and two others — G. Gordon Liddy and James W. McCord — were also convicted of burglary and conspiracy.

During the trial of Liddy and McCord, Alfred C. Baldwin III testified that he had listened to telephone conversations from the DNC headquarters at the Watergate complex. Mr. Baldwin was given immunity from prosecution in return for his testimony.

Mr. Baldwin said that from his post at the Howard Johnson's motel across the street from the Watergate, he had listened to more than 200 telephone calls through a tap on the phone of Spencer Oliver, a top DNC official.

But Mr. Hougan writes, Mr. Baldwin

was actually — and unknowingly — listening to conversations on a bugged phone in a nearby apartment complex involving a prostitution ring whose clients allegedly included high-level Democrats and White House staff members.

A secretary at the DNC offices had used Mr. Oliver's office to introduce some Democrats to some of the prostitutes, Mr. Hougan says.

When the prostitution ring was broken up by police early in June 1972, the burglars were ordered into the Watergate office building to find out what the Democrats had been able to learn about the Republican clients of some of the prostitutes, says Mr. Hougan.

"Watergate, then, was not so much a partisan political scandal as it was, secretly, a sex scandal," Mr. Hougan concludes.

Earl J. Silbert, who prosecuted the Watergate burglars, did not return telephone calls seeking comment. But he

told The New York Times last week that he remained confident that the Watergate offices had been bugged.

And he said Mr. Baldwin's testimony about hearing conversations from the DNC offices "was never contested by anyone, including the defense at trial."

FBI spokesman Tom Deakin declined comment on Mr. Hougan's account.

In the book, Mr. Hougan also presents circumstantial evidence he says shows that "Hunt and McCord were secretly working for the CIA while using the White House as a cover for domestic intelligence operations."

The FBI documents expressing doubt that a bug had ever been put in the DNC headquarters were withheld from the Senate committee that investigated the break-in and cover-up, Mr. Hougan says.

He calls for the "formation of a new, nonpartisan commission of inquiry" that would have access to all the documents involving the wide-ranging Watergate scandal.